3

NATSUMI ANDO

Something's Wrong with Us

Something's Wrong With Us

NATSUMI ANDO

3

やっぱり

Tsubaki Takatsuki

The heir to the historic *wagashi* shop Kogetsuan. Proposed to Nao without realizing that she is his childhood friend.

Nao Hanaoka

A *wagashi* confectioner. Finds meaning in life by making *wagashi* that connect her to her late mother.

Seeing the color red gives her severe heart palpitations.

CHARACTERS

The Proprietress

Tsubaki's mother. She lost her husband (Tsubaki's father) 15 years ago, and has been desperate to make Tsubaki the head of Kogetsuan ever since.

Old Master Takatsuki

Tsubaki's grandfather. The head of Kogetsuan. Mistreats Tsubaki because he is convinced that Tsubaki isn't his real grandson.

STORY

As a child, Nao met Tsubaki at Kogetsuan, the historic *wagashi* shop where her mother worked as a live-in confectioner of traditional Japanese sweets. One fateful day, her mother was arrested on murder charges and Nao was forced to leave…

15 years later, Tsubaki and Nao meet again, clashing head-on in a test of their *wagashi*-making skills. Tsubaki doesn't recognize Nao, but suddenly asks for her hand in marriage.

What could Tsubaki possibly want…?

The two work together to make amends for offending Shirafujiya. Despite their success, however, Old Master Takatsuki rebukes Nao, calling her a fake bride.

In response, Tsubaki declares that they will start sharing quarters, and the two end up consummating their relationship. But immediately following an intimate moment, Tsubaki says something that makes Nao's heart freeze.

CHAPTER 11
Spring, 15 Years Ago ——— 5

CHAPTER 12
The "Mother" ——— 33

CHAPTER 13
Trapped in a Room ——— 59

CHAPTER 14
Sweets for a Tea Ceremony ——— 87

CHAPTER 15
The Tea Room ——— 117

A SHORT STORY
The Kitten and Tsubaki ——— 148

IF SAKURA APPEARED NOW, I'D HAVE HER DISAPPEAR... OUT OF MY SIGHT, FOREVER.

CHAPTER 11
Spring, 15 Years Ago

WHY...?

WH...

CREAK

BECAUSE SAKURA'S MOTHER...

...KILLED MY FATHER.

THAT DAY MY FATHER DIED...

THAT DAY THE CAMELLIAS IN THE GARDEN WERE IN FULL BLOOM...

THE DAWN WAS BARELY BREAKING, AND EVERY-ONE WAS STILL SOUND ASLEEP...

"KILLED"...

...HIM...?

I SAW HER.

15 YEARS AGO,

WHEN I WAS SIX YEARS OLD.

MOMMA...
IS GONE
ALREADY...?

MOMMA
...

...WAS
IN THE
YOUNG
MASTER'S
ROOM?

I SAW
SAKURA'S
MOTHER AND
MY FATHER
TOGETHER.

SAKURA WAS
NO LONGER
MY LIGHT...

EVERY-
THING...

TURNED
A DEEP
BLACK...

FROM
THAT DAY
ON...

AND ONLY HATRED REMAINED.

MOMMA...

COULD SHE HAVE REALLY...?

THE MOMMA I KNEW...

BUT I GUESS...

...NONE OF THIS CONCERNS YOU.

NAO?

ICHI FLIP?

TH-THIS IS...

THE LAST TIME WE DO THIS.

...!

...

OF COURSE NOT.

JUST LOOK AT US.

IT'S NOT LIKE WE LOVE EACH OTHER.

DID SOMETHING HAPPEN THAT NIGHT THAT MADE HER...

THAT'S WHAT THEIR RELATION-SHIP WAS?

MOMMA WENT TO THE YOUNG MASTER'S ROOM THAT DAY.

NO.

I REFUSE TO BELIEVE IT.

I WON'T.

...THAT I'M SAKURA.

I CAN'T EVER LET HIM FIND OUT...

DRIZZLE しと

DRIZZLE しと

DRIZZLE しと

YOU'RE UP EARLY TODAY.

GOOD MORNING, TSUBAKI-SAN.

THAT'S RIGHT.

I HAVE TO ACT LIKE NORMAL.

GRAB

I'LL BE IN THE KITCHEN.

YOU ACT AS IF NOTHING HAPPENED.

GO AHEAD.

IT TICKS ME OFF.

IF YOU CAME LOOKING FOR A PASSIONLESS KISS, I'LL GIVE YOU AS MANY AS YOU WANT.

JUST...

...A PIECE OF THREAD.

DID TSUBAKI SLEEP WITH YOU?

WHISPER

M-
MOTHER...

GOOD MORNING, NAO-SAN.

BUT THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY THINGS IN THE WAY.

THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO GET OUT OF MY DRESSER,

NAO-SAN, COULD YOU GIVE ME A QUICK HAND BEFORE GOING TO THE KITCHEN?

WHAT IS SHE PLOTTING?

OF COURSE, MOTHER.

WHAT...

AH.

THIS IS IT.

WHAT...

...IS SHE UP TO NOW?

A KIMONO?

IT'S A KOGETSUAN HEIRLOOM.

MY OWN MOTHER-IN-LAW PASSED IT DOWN TO ME.

BUT...

COULD IT BE LINED WITH NEEDLES?

...

JUST TRY IT ON.

COME.

I'D LOVE FOR YOU TO WEAR IT AS THE BRIDE, NAO-SAN.

YOU'RE HAVING A WEDDING, AREN'T YOU?

SWISH

BRIGHT RED CAMELLIAS...

IT'S... FAR TOO LAVISH...

UM... I...CAN'T WEAR THIS KIMONO...

...UH...

DON'T BE SILLY. IT'S LOVELY WITH YOUR BLACK HAIR.

B... BUT...

NAO-SAN...

BA-DUMP

...IS YOUR MOTHER NOW?

WHERE...

I'D LOVE TO KNOW...

...EVERY-THING ABOUT TSUBAKI'S PRECIOUS BRIDE.

WHAT...?

IN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT...

PASSED AWAY...

MY MOTH-ER...

M...

BOTH YOUR BODY...

...*AND* YOUR LIES.

HOW QUIVERINGLY NAÏVE.

W...WELL...

WHERE?

...WHEN?

I'VE BEEN THINKING...

SWIP

THIS BLACK HAIR...

...LOOKS FAMILIAR.

D... DON'T...

YOUR DOWN-TURNED EYES...

COME, TELL ME.

WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?

WHERE WERE YOU AS A CHILD?

DOES SHE...?!

YOUR SICKLY...

...PALE SKIN.

SPRING,
15 YEARS
AGO—

ガタッ
CLATTER

WHERE WERE
YOU...

...IN THE SPRING,
15 YEARS AGO?

TSUBAKI!

DID HE REALIZE...?

...!

OH, NO...

SOMEHOW...

I HAVE TO PRETEND...

WHAT DO I DO?

SAKU—

EXCUSE ME.

A WOMAN WHO SAYS SHE'S NAO-SAN'S MOTHER...

SORRY FOR INTER-RUPTING.

NOT NOW! WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING.

BUT... THERE'S SOMEONE AT THE DOOR.

Something's Wrong With Us

DID YOU MAKE THIS, TSUBAKI?

THIS SWEET...

A GIRL NAMED SAKURA DID...

SHE'S MY FRIEND.

NO, GRAND-FATHER.

IS THAT SO...

WELL, HE LOST HIS SON, WHOM HE HAD SUCH HIGH HOPES FOR.

BUT IT'S BEEN NEARLY A WHOLE YEAR...

IS SOJURO-SAN STILL UNWELL?

I JUST ***KNOW*** *THAT'LL HELP HIM GET BETTER.*

THIS TIME FOR SURE, I'LL MAKE A SWEET GRANDFATHER WILL LIKE.

NO...

I DON'T WANT THIS.

I WANT SOMETHING MADE BY THAT GIRL, SAKURA.

THAT GIRL...

SSHHHH

WHAT...

...DID YOU JUST SAY?

庵 月 光

Sign: Kogetsuan

...TO BE NAO-SAN'S MOTHER.

THERE'S A LADY AT THE DOOR WHO CLAIMS ...

MOMMA'S NOT ALIVE ANYMORE.

SO WHO...

WHO COULD IT BE?

WHAT'S GOING ON?

NAO!

THANK GOODNESS! I'VE FOUND YOU AT LAST.

HON-ESTLY, YOU WORRIED ME SICK!

MY NAME...

...IS YUKO HANAOKA.

I MUST APOLOGIZE...

FOR SUCH A SUDDEN INTRUSION.

YUKO...

HANAOKA...

MY FAMILY RUNS A LITTLE JOINT THAT MY FATHER STARTED,

WHERE NAO WAS BORN AND RAISED.

WAJIMA?

YES.

THIS ISN'T MUCH...

...BUT IT'S SOME SEAWEED TEA FROM WAJIMA, OUR HOME-TOWN.

WHY WOULD SHE LIE LIKE THIS...?

I'M SO SORRY, NAO.

BUT I'M GLAD...

...THAT YOU SEEM HAPPY HERE.

BUT I WAS SUCH A LOUSY MOTHER...

WHO...

NAO MUST HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF ME. SHE LEFT THE HOUSE AT 18, AND I NEVER HEARD FROM HER SINCE.

I'M EMBARRASSED TO SAY I ONLY KNOW ABOUT THE WEDDING THROUGH SOME RELATIVES.

WHO IS SHE?

WHERE WERE YOU AS A CHILD?

THIS BLACK HAIR LOOKS FAMILIAR.

...FOR NOW,

I HAVE TO RUN WITH HER LIE.

NAO-SAN SAID...

...HER MOTHER PASSED AWAY IN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT.

BUT...

I'M SORRY.

THAT'S WHY I HAD TROUBLE...

ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS HONESTLY...

SO I MADE UP THAT LIE.

I...

BROKE ALL TIES WITH MY PARENTS WHEN I LEFT HOME...

...BUT DID SOMETHING HAPPEN THEN?

YOU SEEMED FIXATED ON SPRING 15 YEARS AGO...

REST ASSURED...

...I'LL SEE TO IT THAT NAO-SAN IS HAPPY.

MRS. HANAOKA.

...

IT'S...

IT'S NOTH-ING...

I PROMISE.

TSUBAKI...

SHE'S GOING...?

H-HOLD ON...!

M-MOM!

I'LL SEE YOU OUT.

...

PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE OF NAO.

THAT'S A RELIEF.

THEN I SHOULDN'T CAUSE YOUR SHOP ANY MORE TROUBLE.

I'LL TAKE MY LEAVE FOR TODAY.

DON'T TELL ME YOU TRUST THAT GIRL.

OR ANYTHING SHE SAYS.

AREN'T YOU KICKING HER OUT, TSUBAKI-SAN?

WHY WOULD I KICK OUT...

...THE PERSON I LOVE?

SLAM!!

DON'T THINK...

...I BELIEVED *THAT...*

THUNK

I WON'T ALLOW THIS...

THOSE EYES...

THEY'RE THE SAME AS THAT WOMAN'S...

I'LL PROVE WHO SHE IS AND THROW HER OUT *FOR GOOD.*

WAIT!

HOLD ON, *PLEASE!*

...!

WHY WOULD YOU PRETEND YOU'RE MY MOTHER...?

WHO...

...ARE YOU...?

CHAPTER 4

I'M JUST DOING SOMEONE A FAVOR.

...BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY ANSWERS.

I'M SORRY...

YUP.

A FAVOR?

FOR ONE OF MY CUSTOMERS.

WHO WOULD DO THAT FOR ME?

WHO OUT THERE COULD POSSIBLY—

...BUT YOU NEEDED THE HELP, RIGHT?

'COURSE, I GOT A LITTLE EXTRA FOR MY TROUBLES...

SEE, I OWN A SMALL PUB OUT ON THE EDGE OF NAGAMACHI...

...AND A REGULAR THERE ASKED ME TO HELP YOU OUT.

IS...

IS THAT CUSTOMER A MAN?

IN HIS THIRTIES?

WITH GLASSES?

THAT MAÑ...

I'LL GO ANYWHERE.

COULD YOU HELP ME MEET HIM?

PLEASE.

...WHO GAVE ME THAT LETTER FROM MOMMA...

It wasn't me.

OH...

OH, HONEY ...

PLEASE.

PLEASE...

I'M SURE HE KNOWS.

...MOMMA'S INNOCENCE.

HE CAN PROVE...

AND ONLY HATRED REMAINED.

PLEASE!

I'VE GOTTA CHARGE HIM EXTRA FOR THIS.

JEEZ...

I OPEN UP AT SIX.

PUB YUKO
2-OO-XX Nagamachi,
Kanazawa, Ishikawa
Prefecture 920-0865
Tel: (076-OOO-XXXX)

I CAN'T STOP YOU FROM COMING AS A CUSTOMER...

...THOUGH I CAN'T PROMISE YOU'LL SEE HIM THERE.

I SAW HER.
I SAW SAKURA'S MOTHER AND MY FATHER TOGETHER.

IF WHAT TSUBAKI SAID IS TRUE... DOES THAT MEAN...

...THE PROPRIETRESS AND THE YOUNG MASTER HAD A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP?

IF SO, THE PROPRIETRESS HAD A REASON TO KILL HIM.

BUT I **NEED** TO FIND OUT...

I MIGHT FIND SOMETHING THAT'S HARD TO STOMACH.

...OR I'LL NEVER KNOW THE TRUTH...

THAT TOOK AWFULLY LONG.

W-WELL, IT'S REALLY BEEN A WHILE.

WE HAD A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.

WE HAVE TO GET YOUR MOTHER TO COME...

...TO OUR WEDDING.

...A WED-DING?

ACTUALLY?

DOES TSUBAKI BELIEVE...

...THAT I'M NOT SAKURA?

R...
RIGHT.

THAT SOUNDS LOVELY.

WHEW.

THE LIE ACTUALLY WORKED.

WE SHOULD MAKE IT A PROPER AFFAIR.

SHIRAFUJIYA-SAN DOES HAVE A POINT.

THE *WAGASHI* RECORDS ARE STORED IN A ROOM DEEP IN THE HOUSE.

THERE'S A SWEET I WANT TO MAKE FOR THE CEREMONY.

A SWEET?

AN HEIRLOOM SHOP RECIPE.

I NEVER KNEW ABOUT THIS ROOM.

WHEN SHOULD WE HAVE THE WEDDING?

THEN...

...HOW ABOUT THE 23RD NEXT MONTH?

I-I DON'T REALLY MIND...

...BUT THAT'S FITTING FOR US, ISN'T IT?

IT'S AN UNLUCKY *BUTSUMETSU* DAY...

SHE REALLY...

...DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ME AT ALL.

CREAK

WHAT WAS I THINKING?

THE PROPRIETRESS ASKED ME EARLIER...

...!

...IF I TRUST YOU, NAO.

SHATTER

THE LESS I TRUST SOMEONE...

...THE MORE I WANT TO KEEP THEM BY MY SIDE.

SGT

THIS MAN...

...ISN'T SO EASY TO FOOL.

Something's Wrong With Us

CHAPTER 13
Trapped in a Room

HERE...

...WE CAN HAVE A PROPER TALK.

...!

BA-DUMP

WHAT ARE YOU *REALLY* AFTER?

THOUGH I DO HAVE ONE EXCEPTION...

WHEREVER YOU CAME FROM,

WHATEVER YOUR INTENTIONS, I THOUGHT IT DIDN'T MATTER.

I DIDN'T CARE WHO YOU WERE IF IT MEANT I COULD CALL OFF MY MARRIAGE WITH HASEYA..

SO WHY...

...DID YOU AGREE TO MARRY ME?

...

I...
LEFT HOME AFTER FALLING OUT WITH MY MOTHER...

...BUT NO ONE WOULD HIRE ME WITHOUT PROPER CREDEN-TIALS,

AND I WAS AT A LOSS ABOUT WHERE TO GO.

I THOUGHT IF I MARRIED YOU...

...I COULD KEEP MAKING SWEETS FOREVER.

I *LOVE* *WAGASHI.*

ALL I WANT IS TO KEEP MAKING THEM.

...

THEN...

...THAT MUST MEAN YOU DON'T NEED ANYTHING ELSE.

I'LL BRING YOU FOOD IN THE MORNINGS AND EVENINGS, AT LEAST.

SLAM

GASP

HEY...!

RATTLE

RATTLE

RATTLE

RATTLE

WAIT!

DON'T DO THIS!

BAM

BAM

BAM

TSUBAKI!

カリ
CLATTER

I OPEN PUB UP AT SIX.

I CAN'T STOP YOU FROM COMING AS A CUSTOMER.

I HAVE TO FIND IT.

カリ
RUSTLE

カリ
RUSTLE

THERE MUST BE SOME-THING.

WHAT DO I DO...?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM?

SOMETHING...

...THAT *PROVES* HER IDENTITY.

I... I WAS JUST ORGANIZING THINGS.

AND THE GIRL? WHERE IS SHE?

YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED.

RUMMAGING THROUGH SOMEONE'S THINGS LIKE THAT...

WE'VE DECIDED...

TO HAVE OUR WEDDING ON THE 23RD NEXT MONTH.

THE SHOP'S CLOSED THAT DAY, TOO.

AT HER MOTHER'S.

THEY HAVE A LOT OF CATCHING UP TO DO,

SO I SUGGESTED SHE STAY THERE FOR A WHILE.

BY THE WAY...

WHAT...?

THE 23RD...?

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? THE 23RD...

THAT'S THE DAY—

YES.

WHY ARE YOU SO DETERMINED...

TO MARRY THAT GIRL?

WHAT?

DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE ***ACTUALLY*** IN LOVE WITH HER.

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOUR SILLY QUESTIONS. PLEASE GO.

YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT NAO-SAN'S MOTHER, EITHER, DID YOU?

YOU KNOW SHE CAN'T BE TRUSTED. SO WHY—

WHY ARE YOU SO DETER-MINED ...

...TO MARRY THAT GIRL?

パタン
TUNK

TSUBAKI-SAN!

HELLO?

BAM

IS ANYONE THERE?!

BAM BAM

지지 ZIP...

DOES NOBODY COME THIS FAR INTO THE HOUSE?

I CAN'T TELL AT ALL... THERE AREN'T ANY WINDOWS.

IT MUST BE LONG PAST SIX PM BY NOW.

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?

IT'S SUFFOCATING...

SO HOT...

CLATTER

WHAT'S TSUBAKI GOING TO DO WITH ME?

!

EVEN TSUBAKI CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE SOMEONE COLLAPSE IN HERE.

I'M NOT HUNGRY.

AFTER I BROUGHT YOUR MEAL ALL THIS WAY?

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO EAT?

WELL, THEY SAY PEOPLE CAN SURVIVE WITHOUT EATING FOR A MONTH OR SO.

I REALLY...

...*REALLY* WANT TO MAKE SWEETS. THAT'S ALL.

WHAT DON'T YOU TRUST ABOUT ME...?!

MAKE AS MUCH AS YOU'D LIKE, IN HERE.

THAT'S ALL YOU WANT, ISN'T IT?

HEH

THE CABINET BEHIND YOU HAS A FULL SET OF *WAGASHI* TOOLS.

AND THE ONE TO ITS LEFT HAS INGREDIENTS.

GWIP...!

SLAM!!

TSUBA—

TUNK

I'VE DREAMED OF USING THIS MOLD ONE DAY.

TH... THIS...

WOW...

JUST LOOK AT ALL THESE.

ALL THESE RECORDS OF WAGASHI, TOO.

カサ RATTLE

ALL SO OLD...

MAYBE THEY'VE FALLEN OUT OF USE.

THIS IS THE ONLY RECENT ONE...

FROM 2002.

COULD IT...?

15 YEARS AGO...

11° ニ 7 FLIP

11° ニ 7 FLIP

Sakura bean white paste

THIS WRITING...

IT'S MOMMA'S HANDWRITING...

光月

Uniform:
Kogetsu

11° FLIP

SAKURA...

11° FLIP

SAKURA...

11° FLIP

THIS ONE, TOO.

SAKURA SWEETS...

YOU MUST HAVE WANTED TO SEE THE SAKURA BLOSSOMS, TOO, NAO.

SORRY.

HOW COULD I HAVE DOUBTED MOMMA...

GRIP

MOMMA...

...EVEN FOR A MOMENT?

CLUNK

I CAN'T JUST STAY PUT HERE.

HEY.

SO TODAY—

O

...!

はっ

WISH

チラッ

GLANCE

NAO?!

HEY...

WO

カバッ

MP

WHOA.

I HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE...

...NO MATTER WHAT.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

…!

THUMP

...

...NNF.

HF...

HUFF

はっ GASP

HUFF

HUFF

NAO!

I HAVE TO GO...

TO YUKO-SAN'S PUB.

HUFF

HUFF

HUFF

WHICH WAY?

IS IT OVER THERE?

THE EXIT...

BACK THEN...

...I HAD NO IDEA...

...TSUBAKI HID ME AWAY.

...ABOUT THE TRUE REASON WHY...

NAO!!

Something's Wrong With Us

NAO!!

CRAAASH

ポタ

RIP

ポタ

RIP

TSU...

TSUBAKI ...!

CHAPTER 14
Sweets for a Tea Ceremony

IT'S A MINOR CONCUSSION AND SOME BRUISING.

YOUR FINGERS MOVE, SO I THINK YOUR BONES ARE FINE.

BUT SINCE YOU'VE HIT YOUR HEAD, PLEASE FOLLOW UP AT THE HOSPITAL..

Sign: Kogetsuan

THANK YOU SO MUCH.

TAKE CARE.

WHAT'S WITH THE TEARS?

YOU SCARED ME.

Y...

I JUST DON'T WANT THEM TO SEE ANY WEAK-NESSES.

I DIDN'T DO IT TO PROTECT YOU.

...

WHAT IN THE WORLD...

WHAT HAPPENED ...?

I HEARD YOU WERE INJURED... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

TSUBAKI-SAN!

...*YOU* WOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE.

I BET...

...

IN ALL LIKELI-HOOD,

SHE WAS BEHIND IT.

YOU MUST REALIZE IT, TOO.

...HMPH..

AS LONG AS YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.

SHE DID IT TO KEEP US FROM GETTING MARRIED...

...BY TAKING YOU OUT.

SHUDDER

AM I THAT MUCH OF A NUISANCE?

...IS THE ONE LAST THING I LIVE FOR.

MAKING WAGASHI...

TH...

THAT'S AWFUL...

SHE'D GO THAT FAR...?

WHY?

I COULD HAVE MADE SWEETS EVERY DAY IN A SIMPLE, BUT COZY SHOP.

BUT INSTEAD—

I COULD HAVE LED A LIFE LIKE THAT.

HOLD ON.

IF YOU HAD STAYED IN THAT ROOM,

THIS NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.

DID YOU...

...LOCK ME IN THAT ROOM BECAUSE...

DOES THAT MEAN...

TH-THEN YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID SO!

...WH—

HE DID IT...

SAID WHAT?

WELL...

...TO PROTECT ME...?

...!

HUH?

THAT'S WHY I—

I WAS SCARED. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT YOU WERE GOING TO DO.

THAT IT WAS FOR MY SAKE...

TH...

...OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

I COULDN'T COME UP WITH ANYTHING ELSE.

I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT...

OH...

YOU CAN'T, SAKURA.

WHO DID THIS?!

ビクッ FLINCH

THE MOLD THAT WAS HERE.

WHO TOOK IT?!

IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO GRAND-FATHER.

THAT MOLD...

HE'LL BE CROSS IF HE SEES YOU WITH IT.

I JUST WANTED TO SHOW MOMMA BECAUSE IT'S SO PRETTY.

OH NO...

IT WAS ME.

I TOOK IT.

ANYWAY...

YOU... JUST...

...STICK CLOSE TO ME, OKAY...?

TSUBAKI?

BUT HE STILL DOESN'T LOOK GOOD.

MAYBE THE PAINKILLERS KICKED IN.

I COULD JUST RUN AWAY FROM HERE, RIGHT NOW.

GWIP

SOME-THING'S WRONG WITH ME.

HIS LEFT HAND'S COLD, TOO.

DID YOU KNOW?

POISONOUS BUTTERFLIES...

...STORE THE POISON FROM THE PLANTS THEY CONSUME AS A CATERPILLAR.

...DON'T YOU *EVER* ACT OUT ON YOUR OWN AGAIN.

I NEED TSUBAKI-SAN TO INHERIT THE SHOP, SO...

IT WAS YOU, WASN'T IT?

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT.

S-SORRY, I FELL ASLEEP...

EXCUSE US.

UM...

MAY WE HAVE A MOMENT?

HEY.

GASP

はっ

Uniform: Kogetsu

OH, SURE.

I'LL GO MAKE SOME TEA.

SWEETS FOR A TEA CEREMONY?

YES.

THERE'S A TEA CEREMONY AT SAMIDARETEI IN TEN DAYS,

AND THEY WANT YOU TO MAKE THE SWEETS, TSUBAKI-SAN.

BY REQUEST FROM THE ***SOKUNKAI***.

I HEARD THEY WERE IMPRESSED WITH SOME SWEETS YOU MADE IN THE PAST, TSUBAKI-SAN.

CAN I GO AHEAD AND ACCEPT?

IT'S ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT SCHOOLS OF TEA IN KANAZAWA.

"SOKUN-KAI"?

MAKING SWEETS FOR THEM...

BRINGS HONOR AND CONFIDENCE TO A *WAGASHI* CONFECTIONER.

SWEETS FOR A TEA CEREMONY...

I'M SORRY.

YOU'LL HAVE TO TURN THEM DOWN.

I CAN'T RUIN THEIR TEA CEREMONY...

...BY MAKING MEDIOCRE SWEETS.

B-BUT WHY?

THEY MIGHT NEVER ASK US AGAIN.

GET US RESULTS IN THREE MONTHS.

IT'S CLEAR AS DAY.

EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM SCREAMS THAT HE WANTS SO BADLY...

...TO MAKE HIS WAGASHI...

IT'S NO PROBLEM. WE'LL DO IT.

WHAT... ARE YOU SAYING?

PLEASE DO IT. I'LL HELP.

NO—

DO YOU WANT TO HUMILIATE ME AGAIN, LIKE YOU DID WITH SHIRAFUJIYA?

...

COULD YOU GIVE US A MINUTE?

...I'M SORRY.

!

HOW...

VIVISH

WHAT, THEN?

YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOUR BELOVED FUTURE HUSBAND?

I JUST DON'T WANT THE PROPRIETRESS TO HAVE HER WAY.

OF COURSE NOT.

...AND WORM MY WAY INTO THIS HOUSEHOLD.

I'M GOING TO MARRY TSUBAKI...

I WANT TO HELP YOU DO THAT.

YOU SAID YOU'RE GOING TO TRANSFORM THIS PLACE.

THIS I...

I'M GOING TO BE YOUR WIFE, AREN'T I?

...HE'S THE ONE PERSON I SHOULD **NEVER** FALL FOR.

THERE'S SOMETHING...

...I WANT YOU TO DO.

...

FOR STARTERS, GET CHANGED.

CLATTER

YOU...

...REALLY SUCK AT PUTTING ON KIMONO.

OOPS.

THOSE FOLDS ARE SCRUNCHED UP.

I- I DID MY BEST, YOU KNOW.

BUT WHY A KIMONO?

AREN'T WE MAKING SWEETS...?

AREN'T WE MAKING SWEETS...?

THEY MERELY SERVE TO COMPLEMENT THE TEA.

THAT'S WHY I NEED YOU TO LEARN.

"LEARN"...?

THE ART OF TEA.

I NEED YOU TO SEE THE WORLD...

...THE WAY *I* SEE IT.

Something's Wrong With Us

CHAPTER 15
The Tea Room

MAEDA TOSHIIE, LORD OF THE KAGA DOMAIN,*

PRACTICED UNDER THE GREAT TEA MASTER, SEN NO RIKYU, AND WAS SO WELL-VERSED IN TEA THAT HE SAT TO THE RIGHT OF HIDEYOSHI** AT THE GRAND TEA CEREMONY OF 1587.

THANKS TO TOSHIIE, THE TEA CEREMONY BECAME FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN KANAZAWA AND STILL LIVES ON TODAY.

* Present-day Ishikawa and Toyama Prefectures.
** The reigning regent and chancellor at the time.

WITH THE TEA CAME THE SPREAD OF WAGASHI.

WAGASHI SERVES TO COMPLEMENT THE TEA...

...SO MAKING WAGASHI FOR A TEA CEREMONY IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE ART OF TEA.

A ROOM FOR APPRECIATING TEA...

I WAS ALREADY LEARNING THE ART OF TEA HERE AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER.

THE OLD MASTER HAD THIS TEA ROOM BUILT WHEN HE BECAME A CERTIFIED TEA INSTRUCTOR.

...YOU BOW ONCE TO THE HANGING SCROLL.

ONCE YOU ENTER...

BUT ONLY UNTIL I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD.

IT EXISTS IN REVERENCE TO THE IDEA OR SENTIMENT WRITTEN ON IT.

THE HANGING SCROLL IN THE SACRED ALCOVE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT THAT MAKES UP THE TEA ROOM.

...

WHAT ABOUT THIS SCROLL?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

I NEVER KNEW THAT...

LET'S BEGIN.

YOU BE THE MAIN GUEST.

SIT OVER THERE.

I'LL PREPARE THE TEA WITH MY LEFT HAND TODAY.

HIS MOVEMENTS ARE SO FLUID.

SO GRACEFUL...

SO METICULOUS...

AND SO...

...BEAUTIFUL...

ARE TSUBAKI'S SWEETS SO ELEGANT...

...BECAUSE HE GREW UP KNOWING THE WORLD OF TEA?

"WHEN YOU PUT YOUR MOUTH TO IT, AVOID THE FRONT OF THE BOWL."

BUT **WHERE** IS THE FRONT?!

ONCE YOU TAKE THE BOWL, PLACE IT INSIDE THE EDGE OF THE MAT.

SIT EIGHT *SUN** BEHIND THE EDGE OF THE TATAMI MAT.

UH... "EIGHT" ...?

"EDGE" ...?

WHEN YOU PUT YOUR MOUTH TO IT, AVOID THE FRONT OF THE BOWL.

TH...THANK YOU FOR THE TEA.

HOLD IT.

*One *sun* is roughly one inch.

IN THE WORLD OF TEA, EACH MOMENT ONLY EXISTS ONCE.

NO WAY.

I CAN'T DO THIS!

THAT'S THE KIND OF CEREMONY WE MAKE SWEETS FOR.

EVEN IF A TEA CEREMONY IS HELD AT THE SAME TIME OF YEAR WITH THE SAME GUESTS...

IT CAN NEVER BE REPLICATED AGAIN.

SWEETS FOR A FLEETING MOMENT...

はっ GASP

ONE MUST TREASURE THE WORDS EXCHANGED, THE ATMOSPHERE, AND THE EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED THERE.

WHAT'S THIS?

I SEE TWO RATS HAVE SNUCK IN HERE.

TSUBAKI-SAN AND NAO-SAN'S WEDDING...

IS GOING TO BE ON THE 23RD NEXT MONTH?

WHAT?

ISN'T THAT WHEN THE OLD MASTER HOLDS HIS ANNUAL TEA CEREMONY FOR KOGETSUAN'S REGULARS?

IF WE HAVE A WEDDING,

NO ONE WILL GO TO THE TEA CEREMONY, WILL THEY...?

WE'LL BE BUSY WITH THOSE PREPARATIONS AFTER THE SOKUNKAI TEA CEREMONY.

BUT THE 23RD...?

MASTER TAKATSUKI.

TSUBAKI-SAN DELIBERATELY CHOSE—

DO YOU SUP-POSE...

JOJIMA.

YOU'RE BETTER OFF NOT MAKING ASSUMPTIONS.

...

SOR-RY.

S...

OH, WHAT'S THE RUSH?

I'LL CLEAN THIS UP RIGHT AWAY.

IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE HAD YOUR TEA.

...

IT LOOKS LIKE I WON'T BE HAVING THE SWEETS THERE, THOUGH.

SOKUNKAI'S TEA CEREMONY.

I'VE BEEN INVITED AS A GUEST.

I HAVE NO INTENTION OF EATING ANYTHING...

...MADE BY SOMEONE WITH A DISHONEST SOUL.

WAIT A MOMENT.

WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?

YOU...

...LIAR !!

HE'LL LEAVE THE SWEETS WE MAKE FOR THE TEA CEREMONY.

AND THE WEDDING, TOO.

GOOD LUCK WITH THAT.

IN FRONT OF EVERYONE...

...WE'RE DOING THIS, RIGHT?

WE'LL MAKE SOMETHING THAT THE OLD MASTER WON'T BE ABLE TO RESIST.

I ALREADY KNOW WHAT WE'RE GOING TO MAKE.

HUH? WHAT'S THAT?

H-HOLD ON.

OTOSHIBUMI ARE A GREAT STAPLE ITEM...

OTOSHIBUMI?

AN *OTOSHIBUMI*.

...BUT SHOULDN'T WE CHOOSE SOMETHING MORE STRIKING? LIKE HYDRANGEAS?

IT'S WHAT THE HOST WANTS.

HUH...?

...IS MADE TO LOOK LIKE A LEAF WITH AN EGG LAID ON IT BY AN INSECT WITH THE SAME NAME...

...

OTOSHI-BUMI...

WE CAN'T CHANGE THE MOTIF.

BUT...

YOU MUST KNOW WHAT AN *OTOSHIBUMI* REPRESENTS.

THE LEAF PROVIDES PROTECTION AS WELL AS FOOD FOR THE LARVA.

...THE SWEET SYMBOLIZES A PARENT'S EXPRESSION OF LOVE.

THAT'S WHY...

OH...

THE DATE OF THE TEA CERE-MONY...

...IS THE THIRD SUNDAY IN JUNE.

THAT'S FATHER'S DAY.

DON'T WORRY.

THE SWEETS ONLY SERVE TO COMPLEMENT THE TEA CEREMONY...

THAT'S RIGHT.

I'M USED TO THE OLD MASTER'S SPITEFUL REMARKS.

"USED TO" IT...

HAS HE USED IT TO CALM HIMSELF...

...EVERY TIME HE HAD HURTFUL WORDS THROWN AT HIM?

DOES TSUBAKI STILL PRACTICE TEA...

...BECAUSE THE STRICT PROCESS SAVES HIM FROM THINKING ABOUT OTHER THINGS?

HAS HE ALWAYS HAD TO ERASE HIS FEELINGS...?

GRIP...

PUB YUKO
2-OO-XX Nag
Kanazawa, I
Prefecture
Tel: (076-C

NAO...?

DAMN IT.

NAO.

HAS SHE BEEN HERE?

SLAM!

OH, GOOD M—

I'M SURPRISED.

NO. NOT YET.

I SEE...

I DIDN'T THINK...

...HE EVER GOT FLUSTERED.

OTOSHI-BUMI...?

WAIT, WHAT? IT'S MORNING?

I'M SORRY. I'LL PUT THESE AWAY IMMEDIATELY.

I COULDN'T SLEEP, THINKING ABOUT HOW TO MAKE THESE,

AND WANTED TO USE THE TEA ROOM TO THINK.

OH, I JUST CAME UP WITH THIS ONE.

WITH YOUR SKILL, I THINK ADDING LOTS OF LINES MIGHT LOOK PRETTY.

...

...THE SAME WAY LEARNING ABOUT TEA CAN TEACH ME ABOUT WAGASHI...

...IF I LEARN MORE ABOUT TSUBAKI...

...IT MIGHT REVEAL THE TRUTH OF WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY.

WELL, IT'S BECAUSE I'M NOT "USED TO" THIS.

I THOUGHT...

...

YOU BRAIN-STORMED THESE ALL NIGHT?

I'M GOING...

YOU...

REALLY DON'T GIVE UP, HUH?

...TO TAKE A STEP CLOSER TO HIS HEART.

SHE COMES RIGHT AT ME.

NO MATTER WHAT.

DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO STICK CLOSE TO ME?

YOU JUST WANT TO KEEP AN EYE ON ME BECAUSE YOU DON'T TRUST ME.

...YOU ASKED WHAT THIS HANGING SCROLL SAYS?

REMEMBER HOW YES-TERDAY...

I'VE NEVER...

"FUMÔGOKAI."

...KNOWN ANYONE LIKE HER.

"THOU SHALT NOT HAVE A DISHONEST SOUL."

LIE BEFORE THIS SCROLL, AND YOU GO TO HELL.

"WHY ARE YOU SO DETERMINED TO MARRY THAT GIRL?"

I'M NOT EVEN SURE MYSELF.

BUT...

...ONE REASON KEEPS POPPING UP.

...NO MATTER HOW MUCH I TRY TO HIDE IT AWAY...

NAO.

I THINK I'M STARTING TO FALL FOR YOU.

不思議な

...BUT AS A WOMAN.

NOT AS SOMEONE TO MARRY FOR MY OWN MEANS...

WAIT...

WHAT DID HE JUST—

...IF YOU'RE SAKURA!...

...I HAVE TO SUPPRESS THESE FEELINGS!

BUT...

ANSWER ME.

THOU SHALT NOT HAVE A DISHONEST SOUL.

ARE YOU REALLY NAO HANAOKA?

OR...

THOSE WHO LIE...

...WILL GO TO HELL.....

...ARE YOU SAKURA?

To be continued in Volume 4.

Something's Wrong With Us

Thank you very much to:

- Umesakura-sama
- Doi-sama
- Naganawa-sama
- Miyaji-sama
- Morizane-sama

✧ Hope to see you again in Volume 4 ✧

Natsumi Ando

TSUBAKI-SAN, WHERE...

...DID THAT CAT COME FROM?

SO I HAVE TO PUNISH IT.

IT SCRATCHED MY DOMINANT HAND.

A SHORT STORY

The Kitten and Tsubaki

11 CLATTER

MEW

MEW

MEW

MEW

MEW
MEW
MEW
...

I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO PUNISH IT.

A STRAY LIKE THAT IS FILTHY.

YOUR GRANDFATHER WOULDN'T LIKE IT.

LIFE IS FULL OF HARDSHIPS, DON'T YOU THINK?

DARKNESS COMES EVERY NIGHT,

AND YOU HAVE TO KEEP FROM FREEZING IN THE WINTER. SOMETIMES IT RAINS FOR DAYS.

YOU MIGHT HAVE TO SIDLE UP TO NASTY PEOPLE OR GET HURT AT TIMES.

THAT'S WHY...

...

I'M NOT CARING FOR IT.

STOP CARING FOR IT. *NOW.*

...THIS IS MOST DEFINITELY A PUNISHMENT.

THAT'S RIGHT. I'M NOT CARING FOR IT.

I MEAN...

HOW SHOULD I KNOW WHEN NO ONE CARES FOR ME?

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO CARE FOR SOMETHING?

OH.

YOU WERE JUST LONELY.

Something's Wrong With Us

Natsumi Ando

I went to the Hyakumangoku Festival in Kanazawa this year, and got to see the *kencha shiki*, a Shinto tea ceremony that offers tea to the gods. The solemn atmosphere of the ceremony, seeming to forbid even the slightest movement from the onlookers, is seared into my mind.

Translation Notes

"Please!", page 49
Nao is performing a *dogeza* pose, kneeling and bowing her head to the floor. Though rarely used in the day-to-day, it can express a deep apology or request an immense favor or plea. In volume 1 at the marriage ceremony, Old Master Takatsuki and Tsubaki both hold this pose in apology to the Haseya family. A more antiquated usage would be to show deference to a superior.

butsumetsu, page 54
The old Japanese calendar system had six days in a week, with a meaning for each day. *Butsumetsu* is considered unlucky all day, and wedding ceremonies are usually scheduled to avoid them, even in modern times.

wagashi records, page 75
The *wagashi* records here range from the Tenpo Era (Dec. 1830-Dec. 1844) to the Koka Era (Dec. 1844-Feb. 1848). The one recent volume that Nao looks at is from the 14th year of Heisei, or 2002. The records here are more to preserve past *wagashi* designs, rather than the recipes themselves.

Something's Wrong With Us

Something's Wrong With Us 3

KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

Something's Wrong With Us volume 3 copyright © 2017 Natsumi Ando
English translation copyright © 2020 Natsumi Ando

All rights reserved.

First published in Japan in 2017 by Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo.
Electronic Publishing rights for this English edition arranged through Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo.

No portion of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the copyright holders.

English digital edition published by Kodansha USA Publishing, LLC, New York.

www.kodanshacomics.com

ISBN: 9781646595815

Digital Edition: 1.0.0

Translation: Sawa Matsueda Savage
Lettering: Sara Linsley
Editing: Haruko Hashimoto
Kodansha Comics edition cover design by Matthew Akuginow
Ripping: 1r0n